Release 7 days P18

and mrs watanabe

Project I.D. No. 109

NAME: Watanabe, Tajuro DATE OF BIRTH: 1900 PLACE OF BIRTH: Chiba
Age: 75 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: _____

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1919 Age: 19 M.S. ____ Port of entry: San Fran.
Occupation/s: 1. Fisherman 2. _____ 3. _____
Place of residence: 1. Monterey, Ca. 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist Church
Community organizations/activities: Language School

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Internment Camps: North Dakota & Roseburg, NM & Santa Fe, NM
Name of relocation center: Jerome, Ark. & Rohwer
Dispensation of property: Boats-sold; House-rented Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Kitchen Helper 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Monterey, California

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: October 1945
Address/es: 1. Monterey, California 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: _____
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Isao Kusunoki & Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 2/9/75 Place: Monterey, Ca.
translator; Yasuka akamatsu

NAME: TAJURO WATANABE

AGE: 75

DATE OF BIRTH: 1900

PLACE OF BIRTH: Chiba Ken

YEAR OF ENTRY INTO THE USA: 1919, 19 years old.

MAJOR OCCUPATION: Fisherman

CAMP: Special Internment Camps; North Dakota, Rosburg and then to Jerome and to Rowher

DATE OF INTERVIEW: Feb. 9, 1975

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Monterey, California

INTERVIEWER: Tosh Kusunoki

TRANSLATOR: Yasuka Akamatsu

Mr. Tajuro Watanabe, Monterey, Calif.

Age: 75

Interviewed by Rev. H. Takarabe on 2-9-75

Q: Please tell me your name.

A: My name is Tajuro Watanabe.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Chiba Prefecture, Japan.

Q: When were you born?

A: In 1900 (age 75 now).

Q: Can you tell me something about your parents, brothers and sisters?

A: I was the only child.

Q: How was your father?

A: My father came to America before I was born. When I was 8 years old, he returned to Japan, lived with us for 8 years, and then came to America again.

Q: What kind of person was he?

A: He was a diver. He came to Pt. Ross near Monterey at the request of his friend who was in Abalone business. Several men came at that time. In those days, we were able to find lot of abalones in this Monterey area.

Q: Are there many families from Chiba here?

A: There are only two families from Chiba now.

Q: Can you tell me something about your mother?

A: When my father came to America the second time, I was 16 years old. I couldn't go to high school because I had to help my mother carry on the business. I went to the Buddhist temple part-time for further education. When I was about 20 years old, my father made arrangements for me to come and join him in America.

Q: Do you remember something of your childhood days?

A: There was nothing spectacular.

Q: How about school?

A: Since I had to quit school at 16, I attended a private class (Jukū) at the Buddhist temple for about 3 1/2 years. There were only about 10 students.

Q: What year did you come to America?

A: In 1919 (age 19).

Q: On what ship did you sail to America?

A: I think it was "Siberia Maru".

Q: Did you stop in Hawaii?

A: Yes, we were there one night.

Q: Did you notice anything in Hawaii?

A: I didn't notice anything in particular.

Q: What type of people were there on the ship?

A: There were many Filipinos. I noticed they ate with their fingers and were rather sloppy.

Q: Did they get off at Hawaii?

A: I don't know where they got off.

Q: Did you notice any Japanese picture brides?

A: There must have been some.

Q: Before you came to America, what did you think America would be like?

A: Since I was the only child, people in Japan were against my coming to America. However, I wanted to come so badly that I didn't think what America would be like. Because my mother would be left alone to carry on the business in Japan, I got married at the age of 19 before I left Japan and my bride stayed with my mother. When my wife became ill, arrangements were made for her to come to America because we thought she might not be able to make it later.

Q: Where did you land in America?

A: In San Francisco.

Q: What was your impression then?

A: My father was there to meet me. Since we didn't live together, I didn't feel close to my father. After I came to America, he returned to Japan and stayed with my mother a few years. In 1923, he came back to America again and at that time he brought my wife.

Q: What did your mother do?

A: She stayed in Japan alone. There were many cases like that in those days. There were some divorces in such cases too. When Japanese immigrants first started to come to America, couples didn't come together.

Q: Do you remember anything at the immigration office?

A: I think I stayed one or two nights there.

Q: Where did you go from San Francisco?

A: I came to Monterey and lived here since.

Q: How was Monterey when you first came?

A: In those days, everyone was involved in fishing business. My father lived and worked as an abalone diver in Pt. Ross but when I came he got a house in Monterey and moved here.

Q: Were there many Japanese in fishing business?

A: There were several hundred Japanese in fishing business, mainly abalones and sardines. There were no farming in Monterey.

I had no experience but I learned from my father. There must have been over ten sardine canneries on cannery row here in those days.

Q: Was it around 1920?

A: Yes, I think the best fishing was then.

Q: What was the average income of the fisherman?

A: Wages were not too good then. I am not familiar with the sardine business. I learned and worked as an abalone diver because my father was doing it.

Q: Please tell me more about the doving.

A: In those days, we didn't have good diving equipment. A man had to pump air to the man below. Usually, there were four men to a boat. One man dived and three stayed on the boat.

Q: How long was the abalone season?

A: It was 10 months. From January 15th to March 15th was spawning season and abalone fishing was prohibited. We sold the abalones by the dozens. The dover took two shares, small boat owner took one share, mother boat owner one share and three other men who helped the diver got one share each. We divided the income in seven ways. The price of one dozen abalone in those days was $2.00. I hear that the price onf one abalone is $15.00 now.

Q: How many abalones did you pick up in those days?

A: On some good day, we got 150 to 200 dozens of abalones.

Q: How many were on the mother boat?
A: The four men (one diver and three men that stayed above the water on the boat). We owned the boats and dived so we took 4 shares. We had to keep up the boats and equipment so there were some expenses involved. We slept on the mother boat at nights.

Q: Were the other men Japanese?
A: Yes, they were all Japanese.

Q: While working like that, you didn't need to speak English did you?
A: Yes, we didn't need to speak English. That's why so many of us Issei didn't learn English. When we had time, we should have gone to school but we just worked and worked.

Q: Was your father working with you?
A: Yes, he was. But he went back and forth to Japan quite often. Before his last trip to Japan, he ran a party boat for salmon and tuna fishermen. When he became ill, my wife and I took him to Japan.

Q: When was this?
A: About 5 years after I came. After this, two children were born to us. Then we received a telegram from Japan that my father became critically ill. By that time, I owned two boats and had men working for me. We made arrangements for my wife and

I and two children to visit Japan to see him. After we arrived, my mother also became ill. We stayed in Japan 6 months and during that time, both of my parents passed away. Father died first and about a month later Mother passed away. Then we came back to America.

Q: What sort of place did you live?
A: We rented a house at first and later bought a house as I made some money in my business.

Q: Were you able to buy a house?
A: A friend told me that if I planned to live in the United States permanently, I should buy a house. He told me to buy the house in his son's name. I was one of the earliest to buy a house. It's over 40 years ago.

Q: I have heard that Japanese couldn't buy land or a house in those days?
A: We couldn't so we had to buy property in a U.S. citizen's name.

Q: How was it with you during the depression?
A: I didn't suffer too much because I was getting 4 shares from my business.

Q: How were the others around here?
A: I think some had hardship financially.

Q: How old were your children then?

A: They were very young.

Q: Did you have trouble buying food?

A: I didn't have any trouble. I was blessed.

Q: How was it just before the war?

A: Before the war, everything went along smoothly. When WWII broke out, we suffered a blow. We were prohibited from fishing and the boats were tied up. Many of us were interned. They were suspicious of us divers and I belonged to many organizations.

Q: Please tell me something about what the F.B.I. did?

A: I lived in another house just below here. The day the war broke out, our diver's association happened to have a meeting. The F.B.I. men were traveling around town picking up Japanese men. Finally, a local policeman and three F.B.I. men came to my house. They searched every drawer and every place in my house. I took archery lessons while I was visiting Japan and brought back a few Japanese bows and arrows. They picked that up and condemned me for that.

Q: Did they think it was a weapon?

A: I guess they did. They took me to the local police station and put me in jail overnight. There were over 10 other Japanese men already there. The next day, one policeman took me outdoors and made me sit there. He asked if I wanted to go back home and I told him I did. He then said if I reported any telephone calls

made to me, he would let me go home. I told him I would because I wanted to go home. I went home and told my wife to turn away all visitors. Nothing happened for about a week. Then a different group of men came after me and took me to jail again. The Japanese who were there when I first went in were taken to San Francisco and were gone but there were few other Japanese who were brought in there later. There were some funny incidents.

Q: Please tell me if you don't mind.

A: Not in the same cell, but there were others held for detention in that jail. There was a prostitute. The next morning, a policeman whom I knew came to take me to a restaurant for breakfast. When I got in his car, the prostitute was there. He took us to a restaurant and made us sit at the same table to eat and watched us. I never felt so embarrassed. When I first went to jail all well-known Japanese were there. I heard they were put on trucks, taken around town to places to eat where they were well known and it was very embarrassing.

Q: Did you hold office in the diver's association?

A: Yes, I was. I was also connected with the language school, Buddhist Church and many organizations.

Q: Mrs, Watanabe, I would like to hear from you, too. Were you worried when your husband was taken away?

A: Yes, I worried because my children were young.

Q: Did you think your husband may not come back?

Mrs. A: Yes, I thought of that, too. I thought of the worst because it was a war between Japan and America.

Q: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, how was it?
Mr. A: As I mentioned before, I was at the diver's association meeting that day. When we got out of the meeting, the surrounding was rather noisy as though something had happened. There were soldiers standing at all corners, and to us, they looked as they were staring at us. The F.B.I. men must have been watching us. They knew places where I went.

Q: When you heard that a war broke out between the United States and Japan, how did you feel?
A: I was reading the newspaper that relations between the two countries were not too good at that time. However, I didn't believe a war would break out so suddenly. I did not think they would even start a war.

Q: Please tell me about the evacuation of Japanese.
A: At the time of the evacuation, I was not home. My children were small and my wife must have had a rough time. She rented our house and left. They were allowed to take only what they could carry with them.

Q: Where were you then?
A: After I was picked up by the F.B.I. men the second time, I was taken to San Francisco and then to an internment camp in North Dakota. From San Francisco, we were put on a train with the

shades down. There must have been two or three hundred Japanese from Northern California on that train. We traveled 4 or 5 days. When we got there, it was all white with snow. The men who were sent there ahead of us were already shoveling snow. After we got there, several names of parolees were announced on the bulletin board everyday. They were allowed to rejoin their families. The ones left behind called the parolees cowards because we didn't want to admit we were losers. However, when my turn came to be moved to another internment camp, I felt very bad. I had tears in my eyes and could hardly write to my wife to let her know that I was being moved. I thought I might never see my family again. We were so emotional, we cried when we parted with other internees whom we became friends.

Q: Is that so. Please tell me more about North Dakota.

A: About a week after I arrived in North Dakota, I headed a talent show because we didn't want to feel depressed.

Q: How long did youstay in North Dakota?

A: I think I was there about one month and then sent to Roseburg Lordsburg, New Mexico, which was near a military base. I think I was there about one year.

Q: Was this place for all Japanese?

A: No, this was for internees. (Other Japanese were sent to War Relocation Centers). We played baseball in the daytime and had talent shows at night. We practiced "Kabuki Plays" and performed them for entertainment. We made the costumes out of

paper. Among the internees, there were drama teachers, too.

Q: How many internees were there in Lordsburg?
A: There must have been about one thousand internees. (Mrs Watanabe says the letters her husband wrote to her were cut out, especially numbers. Sometimes the letters were hard to understand because of the missing words).

Q: Were women in this interment camp?
A: No, they were all men. Among the group of internees who came to Lordsburg, there was an invalid. Others had to walk to the barracks from the train but this man was moved by a car. One night there was a shot and we learned that this man was killed and he was buried there. There was quite a commotion about this case and a hearing was held. It was reported that this man tried to escape but we knew he couldn't even walk. I knew he was in the hospital most of the time. It was quite an issue among the internees but we couldn't do a thing about it.

Q: When you were taken in, how much personal effects were you allowed to bring with you?
A: We were allowed to take necessary items. They transported them for us. They gave us enough food (Mrs. says she often sent food which he requested). While we were under the Military Department, the mess sargeant told us to make requisition for more than we needed. I think the sargeant was taking some. When we moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, we were under the Justice Department and it was more strict.

Q: Did you do any work?

A: Yes, we did a little. There was a watchman for each internee.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: I think they took internees out for farm work. I didn't go out because I worked in the kitchen.

Q: How long were you in Lordsburg?

A: I was there about one year. Then I was sent to Sante Fe for about a year. Altogether, I think I was in the interment camps almost 2 1/2 years.

Q: What did your wife and children do while you were in the interment camp?

A: We listened to shortwave radios and we heard all kind of rumor. We thought Japan was winning and talked about going to Japan. I wrote to my wife to send the children's birth certificates as I planned to make arrangements to take the whole family to Japan. I didn't care if I lost my house in Monterey, but my wife strongly objected and here I am today.

Q: Where did you evacuate to, Mrs. Watanabe?

Mrs. A: After the war broke out, we had voluntarily evacuated to a place near Fresno. Six months after that, we were sent to an Assembly Center in Fresno and then sent to Jerome W.R.A. Center in Arkansas. We stayed there about 2 years. My husband was released from the internment while we were there. Then when Jerome Center was closing, we were transferred to Rohwer W.R.A.

Center, also in Arkansas. In about one half year after that, the war ended and we were allowed to return to California.

Q: How did you communicate with your family?
Mr. A: We corresponded by letters.

Q: Then from Lordsburg, you were sent to Santa Fe and then released to Jerome W.R.A. Center where your family was, is that right?
Mrs. A: I obtained a character affidavit for my husband from a caucasian friend who was the boss of an abalone company and sent it to Washington D.C. Then he was released.
Mr. A: It's a matter of formality. No internee did anything to danger this country.

Q: How did you feel when you were rejoined?
Mr. A: It was war time and I didn't think much about it.
Mrs. A: I forgot how I felt then but even in camp it was hard for a woman alone to raise children.

Q: How did you manage before he rejoined you?
A: In came, if we didn't work, we couldn't receive the $16.00 per month pay and also couldn't receive the $3.00 allowance for each child. So the block manager told me to work. They were short of help in the kitchen so I was asked to work in there. It was cold in camp and unless someone from the family went to cut wood, we couldn't receive any firewood so I did that too.

Q: How old were your children?

Mrs. A: They were both in grammar school. Things happened during the war are completely out of my mind now.

Q: How long were you together in Jerome?

A: Not too long because we were transferred to Rohwer.

Q: Did you work?

Mr. A: I had a talent of staging drama and plays. Friends in Poston, Arizona W.R.A. Center wanted me to come there but I chose to go to Rohwer where there was a teacher of drama from Los Angeles, California and also a friend from Stockton, Calif. whom we used to perform together.

Q: Was Rowher a big town?

A: It was a smaII town.

Q: After you went there, what did you do?

A: After I went there, I wanted to get into the Community Activity Department but there was no openning so I went to work where they made "Miso" (soybean paste) for several months. Then I went into the Athletic Department under the Community Activity.

Q: When did you return to Monterey? Was it soon after you went to Rohwer?

A: It must have been about 6 months. We returned to Monterey in October 1945.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: We couldn't fish anymore. We sold our boats for almost nothing when the war broke out. Our house was rented but there was no rent money because the real estate company whom we had entrusted, said they had spent the money for repairs and upkeep.

Q: Were you able to move into your house right away?

A: No, we had to wait for about 3 months. We had written to have the house vacated but people were still in there when we came back. We stayed with our friends until the house was vacated. Many stayed at the hostel arranged by the churches when they came out of camp.

Q: Did you start your fishing business?

A: No, I didn't. Someone tried to fish for abalones but they couldn't find enough to stay in business. No Japanese is in fishing business now. The young Japanese-Americans will not go into this business. There are few Italians. Except few Japanese who are in other businesses, most of them (Issei generation) are in gardening business.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: I worked for Del Monte Property Co., a development corporation, for about 24 years and retired. Its a big corporation and quite a few Japanese worked there. They own the Pebble Beach Golf Course. You should go and see the place.

Q: Please tell me about hostels.

A: I didn't have to go into a hostel, but many had to.

Q: Do you have an Japanese Association here now?
A: No, we don't. Many towns have Japanese Prefectual Clubs (social organizations) but we don't even have them. We have a Japanese-American Citizens League Chapter.

Q: Do you wish to convey anyting to the younger Japanese generation?
A: I hear that the Sansei (third generation Japanese) are interested in getting closer to us Issei generation. I think the Nisei(second generation) should be buth they are not. I cannot understand why.

Q: What do you think Mrs. Watanabe?
Mrs. A: I don't know either. I heard some Nisei don't like to take their non-English speaking parents among caucasians. I read this in the newspaper. I hear Sansei are good to grand-parents.

Q: I wish you would say something to future generation Japanese.
A: I don't have much of an idea.

Q: Mrs. Watanabe, what did you worry about most since your husband was interned?
A: I think I worried mostwhen he was first taken in, because the children were small.

Q: Is it alright to let the future generation hear this tape?

Mr. A: Yes, please use it.

THE END

(Translated by Y. Akamatsu)